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# Modern Uzbek Family and Marital Relations:

## A Case Study on Mindon Village, Ferghana Province

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### Abstract

This paper focuses on marital relations in the Uzbek family, especially nuclearization of the extended family, its factors, and consequences. Nuclearization in Uzbekistan reflects balance shifting from traditional to modern family relations and brings about changes in family priorities in terms of birth rate, education, selection of marriage partner, transformation of family functions, and, finally, egalitarian tendencies.

To understand the nuclearization process, causes, and consequences, the researcher examines the Uzbek family during the first 24 years of independence after the Soviet era. Family development underwent two primary tendencies. In the first decade of independence, families tended to stick to the traditional form of extended family, conditioned by hardships of the new market economy in the 1990s.

The second decade brought about changed family attitudes about income generating activities, resulting from changes in economic situations. The primary source of family economic survival shifted from extended family membership to nuclear family breadwinners.

**Keywords:** Nuclearization, Extended Family, Migration, Family Structure, Selection of Marriage Partner, Mindon, Ferghana

### ■ Introduction — Mindon Village: Location, population, and main industries

Mindon Village is one of the settlements in Ferghana Province of Uzbekistan, which is part of the Fergana Valley shared by three neighboring countries—namely, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

Mindon is located in the southeastern part of the Fergana Valley. In the West, it borders the outer reaches of Kyrgyzstan's Kadamjay District. In the South, it is situated on the foothills of Alai Range that fringes southern Fergana Valley and borders Kyrgyzstan [Аширов 2015: 9].

Alai Range is located at the northern part of Pamir Mountains.

At the center of the Fergana Province is Fergana City, which is located 35 km to the north of Mindon.

Mindon Village is territorially divided into five *mahalla* neighborhoods (residential communities).

Ethnic majority are Uzbeks. Minorities include Tajiks and Kashgars. However, there are also Persians and Arabs in the neighboring villages.

Mindon has a population of 17,821.

There are 8,905 males and 8,936 females.

In addition, there are 3,469 households and 4,314 families.<sup>1)</sup>

1 Statistics of the *Mindon Kishlak* administration, 2015.

Mindon economy is built on agriculture. As part of the national policy, it produces cotton and grain crops. However, the main household income of villagers comes from cattle breeding, horticulture, and winegrowing.

## ■ Nuclearization<sup>2)</sup> of Family

The world's current socioeconomic situation and globalization have led to evolution of the family as a social institution, specifically to modernization of family relations and functions. Under global social and cultural changes, the family, as the main transmitter of tradition, undergoes transformation as an institution, i.e., transformation that affects its structure and relations between spouses and generations. At the same time, however, family structure is closely bound to lifestyle, traditions, rites, and relations with other families in the community.

During the Soviet period, Uzbek family traditions and rites were subjected to two opposing tendencies. On the one hand, there were attempts to modernize by transformation into a civil society free of religious and feudal influences. On the other hand, there was covert opposition by the community, which regarded these influences as their heritage, with a significant role in their ethno-cultural identity. On the family scale, this heritage is displayed through traditional family rites and a hierarchy of age and gender relations. In other words, the traditional Uzbek family consists of three generations (parents of husband, husband, wife, and children), clearly demonstrating application of gender and age hierarchy.

In the early years of Uzbek independence,<sup>3)</sup> some traditional characteristics of the Uzbek family, which disappeared during the Soviet era, were partially restored. Early and *Shari'a* marriages were reinstituted. Divorce procedures became more arduous. These changes reflect partial return of Islamic and traditional values and institutions.

Hardships during the 1990's transitional period prompted some young couples to continue living in extended parental families, making it easier to engage in collective household labor and to share responsibility for rearing children. In rural areas, extended families' existence was supported by state policy for supporting emerging private farms and household economies, which functioned more successfully with, primarily, family members' labor as part of an economy of extended families. However, growing family nuclearization during the last two decades marked emergence of a new type of household economy.

By and large, the number of extended families compared to nuclear families reflects the relationship between tradition and modernity in everyday life and family affairs. Extended families provide a better environment for producing and maintaining ethnic traditions and norms through new generations. At the same time, the extended family is a less favorable environment for modern novelty. In contrast, nuclear families better accept innovations, modernity, and democratization of family relations. This by no means necessitates loss of ethnic identity and traditionalism for Uzbek families, who, regardless of their form and type, maintain strong ties with parental families.

## ■ Economic Need as a Driving Force for Adherence to Tradition or Adaptation to Modernity

The first decade of independent Uzbekistan was marked by adherence to traditional family structure. By the term *traditional*, Soviet and Post-Soviet Uzbek scholars mean generally the same thing as those in other Islamic countries, i.e., the extended family. In this, Uzbekistan does not deviate from custom. However, long exposure to Soviet civil practice imposed some peculiarities. One is centralized distribution of land and apartments, which were usually allocated to families regardless of their separate nuclear or joint extended

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2) Nuclearization is the process of movement from an extended family system to a nuclear family system

3) Uzbekistan's independence was achieved in 1991, which marks the beginning of the decades analyzed in the article.

status. For the list of households, what mattered was family as an economic and social unit. However, each separate household could have consisted of one or several nuclear families. Therefore, to obtain additional plots, extended families often pretended that their “nuclear units” were going to establish separate households. In this case, the state would provide them separate household plots or apartments, while, in fact, they continued living with their extended families. Therefore, “a household” in Soviet, and even in Post-Soviet, statistics is not the same as a nuclear family.<sup>4)</sup>

For our purposes here, the first decade of independence should be divided according to conditions because the economic background changed rather quickly and imposed new realities on family structures. The first half of the decade was marked by adherence to the time-proven extended family. Although the Soviet economy’s collapse deprived most families of habitual sources of cash income, for instance, employment in Soviet organizations, enterprises, and collective farms, their economic situation was not so bad. Influx of cash income continued from other sources such as grandparents’ retirement pensions and various forms of social welfare. For instance, the president established allowances for each child under 16. Besides that, households would use their members’ collective labor to produce joint agricultural products from household plots, including additional plots allocated to young families. Additional cash income was also quite easily obtained through engagement of all household members in private entrepreneurship. The private services market was almost unoccupied; therefore, every private enterprise produced extra profits donated to the traditional family’s joint income. The head of household would save money from various forms of income for further distribution according to extended family members’ needs.

However, the first decade’s second half marked gradual decrease in cash income from both entrepreneurship and social welfare. At the same time, private farms gave rise to new income from land, and many were family-based. Therefore, the extended family continued its positive role of collectively preserving all its members’ welfare.

In circumstances of growing unemployment and economic hardship, the existence of extended families provided additional guarantees for successful conception of a new family—both as part of an extended family and as a nuclear family. All a new family’s needs were covered only within its extended family, that is, their residence, nourishment, employment, education, and health care. Therefore, young marriage partners continued enacting all gender and age roles imposed on them as necessary conditions of their family’s existence.

At the same time as the extended family prevented a new family’s impoverishment, it did not allow individuals and couples’ enrichment. Even if a member or a nucleus appeared successful and enterprising, income still went into the family income pool. All extended family members usually labored to bring their share of profit to the family. However, not all shares were equal. Moreover, no direct connection existed between a nucleus or a member’s input and share of profit. The principle of equal distribution, very much akin to the renowned principles of Communism based on need rather than input, dominated in the extended family. Evidently, this principle discouraged private entrepreneurship and initiative.

To sustain roles imposed by circumstances, Uzbek extended families would use such strong aspects as a closed system of economic and fiscal relations. In essence, traditional family relations were mere vehicles of survival in the underdeveloped conditions of public fiscal institutions. For young nuclear families, the lack of a proper credit system made their independent existence impossible because a nuclear family requires loans to cover education, accommodation, and medical expenses—even a paycheck to cover the cost of a basket of goods. During the first decade, public fiscal institution’s inability to provide their needs left young families only one possibility, existence within extended family.

This status quo continued until young families received alternate sources of credit not connected to family

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4) For instance, statistics of the *Mindon Kishlak* administration in 2014 shows that the number of families was 3959, but there were 3392 households.

ties, but based on young family members' professional potential. Most of these changes took place in the second decade of independence.

The second decade of Uzbekistan's independence brought about families' change of attitude toward the entire range of income generating activities. Consequently, collective private entrepreneurship, originally based on all household members' labor, relinquished its position in favor of hired labor. Families came to this conclusion after they faced unavoidable organizational labor conflicts and free market competition. Finally, hired labor became preferable to employment of relatives.

Social welfare continued to decrease and was no longer considered as a fare cash income.

During the last decade, nuclearization's scope has irrevocably grown. However, this has not led to lack of socialization with extended kin. Even living separately, nuclear families still depend on childcare provided by grandparents, while they are employed elsewhere to support all dependents. Financial support to help children and grandchildren is quite likely to come from still working grandparents. In other words, nuclearization does not prevent support from going both ways in time of need.

From a sociological point of view, a family retains family ties even after territorial separation, while its members continue joint family activity considered the main family trait, according to A.I. Antonov's definition [Антонов и Медков 1996: 66-70].

If a family of three generations retains all types of mutual family support even after middle and younger generations separate, use of the term *nuclearization* would be justified in the demographic dimension. However, in the sociological dimension, nuclearization would not be complete because territorial separation is not accompanied by functional separation.

## ■ Migration and Nuclearization

Another second-decade phenomenon is changed attitudes toward migration. In fact, migration provided an essential economic basis for nuclear families to separate from extended family, causing reevaluation of values and affecting migrants' viewpoints.

Research conducted by this author in 2007 shows that the majority of respondents migrated beginning in 2000.

Generally, Uzbekistan is considered a country with very low mobility. The Soviet Union made several unsuccessful attempts to move Uzbek families to rural Russian regions. All families in this social experiment finally returned to Uzbekistan, even though local authorities provided them guaranteed employment and free housing. However, our studies show that migration increased by very sizable amounts in 2000 and after. What could possibly have caused such a dramatic change in attitude?

In the socialist economy era, the state was the main distributor of social amenities for all (e.g., education,

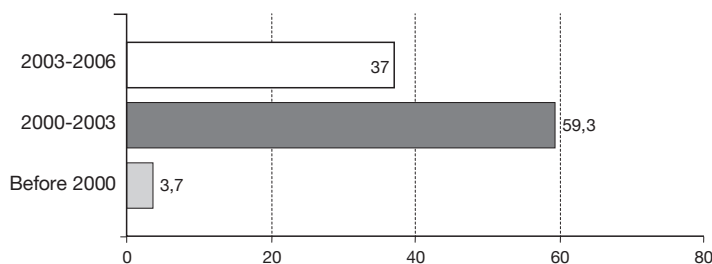
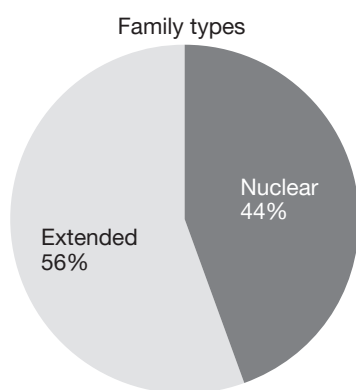


Figure 1. When did you migrate?

Source: [Abdullaev 2008: 166]



**Figure 2. Types of families in Uzbekistan (2016)**

Source: Mindon Village, 2014. (Fieldwork data collected by the Department of Anthropology of the Institute of History, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences.)

healthcare, sports, and recreation). The entire social package provided by the state was free. This situation supported Uzbeks' low mobility, and, consequently, the continued existence of extended families and their traditional way of life. As long as all Uzbeks' social needs were provided, they had little or no incentive to abandon traditionalism in favor of modernity.

During the first decade of independence, Uzbekistan entered a market economy. However, the state continued free provision of most amenities through sizable social welfare, which enabled families to retain their traditional way of life in extended families. During the second decade, however, changes to social welfare provisions and the employment opportunities mentioned above placed families face to face with a true market economy,

in which nearly all social amenities must be purchased. To maintain an appropriate way of life, therefore, Uzbeks had to migrate in search of reasonable income.

As a result, many families improved their economic well-being, and the primary source of family survival shifted from extended family membership to nuclear families' sole breadwinners. Extended families lost their position as main and, in many respects, as sole providers for all their members' needs. Besides that, the state assumed partial provision of such needs for young families in the form of loans for education and housing. Against this background, family nuclearization increased.

In 2014, data from the Mindon village administration showed 83% of nuclear families compared to 17% of extended families. However, this might be an example of discrepancies between registered and actual nuclear families because data from the Department of Anthropology showed that although nuclear families have increased (44%), the amount of extended families remained high (56%).<sup>5)</sup>

What is more, a modern extended family is not the same as an extended family of the Soviet era. Only 10% of families have more than one married son living with parents. In all other cases, both or one parent lives with the family of a son. As we can see, nuclearization in Uzbekistan reflects shifting the balance from traditionalism to modernity in family relations. Nuclearization also brings about changes in family priorities, including birth rate, education, selection of marriage partner, and, finally, egalitarian tendencies.

## ■ Family Structure

As for men and women's equality in the labor market (supported by the spread of general and special education for both genders, guaranteed social provisions, healthcare, and communal services), nuclearization instigates reduction in family size (nuclear families with many children) as a condition of equality's fulfillment. [Голофаст 2006: 198-216]. Nuclear families tend to change their attitudes toward birthrate [Антонов и Медков 1996: 82].

Until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a family's reproductive behavior was driven by the desirability of many children. This was especially important in rural environments because children labored in household plots and family trades. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a change of attitude accompanied the general socioeconomic and cultural development of society and family. A household's economic welfare no longer relied on mere manpower, a situation that resulted in decreased birth rates. Since then, many Uzbek families have had from

5) Mindon Village, 2014. (Fieldwork data collected by the Department of Anthropology of the Institute of History, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences.)

**Table 1. Demographic statistics of Mindon Village Administration, 2014**

Year	2000	2005	2010	2012
Number of families	491	509	582	653
Newborns	122	117	102	80
Marriages	135	108	100	92
New houses	81	100	121	201
Cars	200	261	321	431
Businessmen	7	11	20	38

Source: Mindon Village, 2014. (Fieldwork data collected by the Department of Anthropology of the Institute of History, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences.)

**Table 2. Number of children preferred by Uzbek families**

Number of children	%
1–3	79
More than 3	21

Source: Mindon Village, 2014. (Fieldwork data collected by the Department of Anthropology of the Institute of History, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences.)

two to three children.

From data in table 1, we see increased nuclear families and decreased birthrate, to go along with increased numbers of houses built and cars obtained. We also see an increase in families, while the number of marriages decreased. Finally, data shows increased nuclearization or separation of already existing families from extended families.

Changed economic realities and, consequently, increased nuclearization led to growing understanding of the need to provide a child with proper care and education—this is difficult to achieve in big families. Mindon’s data shows that 79% of families preferred from one to three children.

Both the theory of modernization and the concept of the family’s institutional crisis recognize that a birthrate reduced below simple replacement of generations is brought about by urbanization, industrialization, employment and emancipation of women, level of education, and other objective factors. These two notions lead us to conclude that decreased birthrate is as irrevocable as the vehicle of general progress.

Community attitudes toward divorce are also undergoing fundamental change. Despite a low divorce rate (0.7%), contemporary society tolerates single-parent families, which, in traditional culture, customarily occupied very low positions in community hierarchy.

## ■ Selection of Marriage Partner

Economic and social changes that occurred in Uzbek society during the last two decades have changed the traditional family’s outlook and weight. The economic balance shift from “major” family members to individual members’ greater success, regardless of placement in the family age hierarchy, unavoidably entailed a measure of personal say in selection of life partners. In traditional societies, personal preference very rarely happens. Conventionally, parents or relatives arrange all stages of marriage proceedings without much consultation with the prospective couple. Still, the economic shift was reflected in the shifting of customary arrangements. An unmarried son with greater economic independence became relatively free to propose his choice of bride. Some categories of young women also gained a certain degree of choice. Aside from a potential bride’s moral integrity, the groom’s family evaluates her potential economic donation to the household. From this point of view, a good education and stable, or even potential, employment due to preparation in high-demand labor areas became separate and significant values for a bride.



**Table 3. Preferred age of marriage in Uzbekistan**

Age	Groom (%)	Bride (%)
18–21	8	72
22–25	69	26
26 and older	23	2

Source: Mindon Village, 2014. (Fieldwork data collected by the Department of Anthropology of the Institute of History, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences.)

The prospective couple's feelings are also coming to the fore in decision-making. The education and qualifications of a future husband have become important. Even such personal qualities as compassion, integrity, decency, diligence, independence, and decisiveness have become items for a potential bride's family to evaluate. In contrast, social standing and status have become relatively less important.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century's second half, prospective couples obtained permission to meet before marriage—in public places and usually under a relative or close friend's supervision. However, today's reality provides them the ability to socialize through mobile phones, messengers, and social networking. Thus, a form of modernity provides them avenues for learning more about a prospective spouse without violating rules and norms. Meetings and socialization can take a month or more, and in case of a positive response from a couple, both families launch marriage proceedings. In any case, however, the selection of a marriage partner is never random or unsupervised, and the last say always belongs to the parents [Антонов и Медков 1996: 151].

For couples at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, marriageable age was very young, especially for young women. In the century's second half, marriageable age increased considerably due to legal restrictions and the need to obtain complete general, or even university, education. This directly relates to partners' ability to maintain a family and raise children. Data from the Department of Anthropology study in Mindon (2014) show that the average marital age for males is 25 and for females is 20.

Public opinion increasingly leans toward the necessity of a prospective couple's prolonged socialization, in order to know each other before they come to the important and mature decision to marry and create a family. An increased number of respondents thought that a couple should meet at least 6 to 12 months before making a decision (50.3% in 2009; 55% in 2011), and 27% believed that the socializing period should be at least one year [Убайдуллаева 2011: 3].

Of course, progressive steps to ensure greater egalitarianism in marital relations resulted in partial improvement and positive tendencies for young couples. However, the changes' scope encompasses only some, relatively minor, aspects. Let us examine in greater detail how changes influenced procedures that place cornerstones for prospective couples' family relations, i.e., proceed through stages of mate selection.

The process of mate seeking and selection (*Kelin izlash va surushtirish*)<sup>6)</sup> consists of the following stages: (1) mate seeking and selection, (2) proposal (3) engagement as evidence of selection. The whole pairing process includes mostly meetings of parents, relatives, and neighbors from both sides and results in a verbal agreement between two families. Participation by prospective mates is customarily passive.

While movement toward equality is visible in the process, the regular routine has undergone only slight changes. Already in rites of the pre-wedding stage, one detects signs of women's inequity, which manifest through the rather reflexive role assigned to a bride and her relatives. That is, the last word in selection of a bride belongs to a groom. In essence, mate seeking is still mainly a process of selection of a bride. The role of the bride's family lies in making a decision as to whom to "award the prize." The bride's agreement is only relatively important. Besides that, the groom has wider range in the mate-seeking market.

Actually, the groom's mother initiates mate seeking. A local residential community (*Mahalla*), families of

6) Seeking a bride and information about her and her family (translation from Uzbek)



acquaintances, and relatives usually represent the boundaries of a courtship-marriage market. Sometimes the groom's mother seeks support from her associates in a traditional female network (*Gap*). Once they define the limits of the bride market, they commence selection of a proper marriage partner according to customary criteria. If, in the end, the choice falls on an unknown family, to verify whether it meets their criteria, the mother collects information (*Surushtirish*) about the young woman's relatives and her family of origin. The groom's family members talk to their acquaintances and literally go to the neighborhood where the prospective bride lives to interrogate her neighbors and members of the local neighborhood administration (*Mahalla Committee*). Questions relate to the family's position, its prestige, whether any family members are disabled or incarcerated, and personal traits of the parents and young woman, as well as her ability to manage a household.

Based on this investigation's results, one can conditionally divide projected marriages into those made with brides from families of (i) acquaintances, (ii) kin, (iii) the same neighborhood, and rather rarely, (iv) the groom's choice based on feelings. The latter is usually possible only when the young man is able to prove his choice's eligibility by generally meeting prescribed, customary criteria. However, some families' recent changes in economic disposition have greatly supported their grooms' choice. The following contains a set of unwritten criteria to which most families unconsciously conform.

First is the criterion of *personal homogamy*. This means that the family attempts to find a mate who resembles their child in personality traits. In women, generally, the ideal virtues are humility, submissiveness, and gentleness. However, families regard as more important seeking similarity in group membership, considering such characteristics as ethnicity, religion, class, and locality, which could be defined as *social homogamy*, examined below:

*Ethnic homogamy* is the dominant criterion in Uzbek marriage practices. However, there are some interethnic marriages, predominantly with Uyghurs and Tajiks. These ethnic groups resemble Uzbeks in mode of life, traditional occupation, and rites that make assimilation a simple process. Moreover, this situation bears a two-way character, since Uzbeks assume many elements from cultures of other indigenous groups.

The ethnicity of the region's indigenous inhabitants does not represent an ultimate obstacle to marriage if the bride and groom have the unity that is usually called "Muslim ethnicities." *Religious homogamy*<sup>7)</sup> is a mandatory condition. Often, this criterion overlaps ethnic homogamy. In regard to Central Asian indigenous ethnicities,<sup>8)</sup> more significant is that prospective mates are distinguished from "Russian-speaking ethnicities" or Christian ethnicities. In this case, religion becomes an identifying factor.

*Locality homogamy* or residence in the same area is highly appreciated by Uzbeks. Therefore, families of origin prefer proposals by families in the same neighborhood, village, or city. To some extent, such marriages manifest endogamy that strengthens inter-neighborhood ties and broadens opportunities of extended and supportive kinship.

*Marital status homogamy* is a rule according to which, predominantly, previously unmarried men can propose to previously unmarried girls. Sometimes, however, divorced men marry a second time to previously unmarried women, but this very rarely happens in reverse.

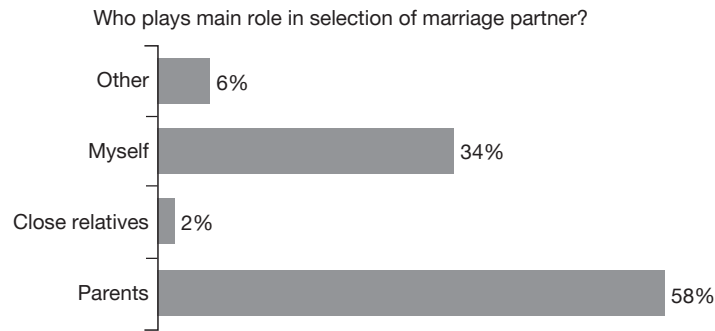
*Social status homogamy* relates to the two fathers' occupations (positions), quality of residence, and availability of assets. This criterion became especially weighty in the transition period due to social stratification.

*Educational homogamy* can be also regarded as a measure of social status. Men tend to marry "down." Women who have a university education usually marry men with the same level of education. Furthermore, even couples' fathers tend to resemble each other in education.

Figure 3 shows that marriage-partner selection criteria are undergoing slight changes toward personal

7) The author did not specifically study existing religious aristocracy (*Oq Suyak*). However there is evidence indicating that their marriages are mostly made within an appropriate stratum, especially for women.

8) Three ethnic groups living close to each other in the research sites.



**Figure 3. Percentage of persons playing the main role in marriage partner selection in Uzbekistan**

Source: Mindon Village, 2014. (Fieldwork data collected by the Department of Anthropology of the Institute of History, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences.)

involvement by prospective partners.

Data collected by researchers of the Department of Anthropology in Mindon Village, in 2014, shows that looks of a prospective groom almost do not matter for the most of brides. However, about half of them would rather have a well-behaving groom with high moral standards and nice manners. Education also plays sizable role in the selection.

**Table 4. What features of a prospective groom should be considered?**

Features	%
Good looking	6.0
Education	21.0
Well-being	5.0
Moral standards	29.0
Good manners	20.0
Origin	8.0
Other (agreement of parents)	11.0

Source: Mindon Village, 2014. (Fieldwork data collected by the Department of Anthropology of the Institute of History, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences.)

## ■ Transformational Tendencies of Family, Functions, Roles, and Policies

Over the course of centuries, the family remains the most important social institution despite interminable exposure to changes in culture, world outlook, values, the marital relationship, women's status, family priorities, and so on. Therefore, Uzbekistan's Family Policy priorities aimed to increase family well-being and to provide all resources needed to fulfill its primary functions.

Uzbekistan signed the Millennium Development Goals Declaration and progressively pursued its goals, especially concerning activism of the female factor in sustainable development and securing gender equality. In this regard, the president, the government, and parliament issued many decrees and adopted many laws. The Law of Family Entrepreneurship, adopted on April 26, 2012, provides families new opportunities to strengthen their economic well-being. The Cabinet of Ministries decree on Improvement of Social and Residential Conditions of Families, issued on April 7, 2012, provides new families opportunities to obtain their own residences. These and other legislative measures provide intensive outside influence that moves families further toward modernity and nuclearization. State policy purposefully targets changes in family economic status and functions.

Indeed, many family functions have transformed during the last two decades. The contemporary family model

differs significantly from the traditional one. According to the traditional pattern, the family's predominant function was reproduction. In the current family, the emotional and psychological function imperative for lasting and stable family ties takes a special place. The birthrate steadfastly decreases, meaning that reproductive function is also undergoing transformation.

Another function undergoing transformation is recreational. During the last decade (2005–2015), the structure of pastimes has changed. Along with traditional festivities in recreational parks, cities of Uzbekistan offer such entertainment as bowling, theaters, motion picture theaters, as well as malls that concentrate shopping, catering, and entertainment, where families can combine the pleasures of both bread and entertainment.

Thus, we can conclude that as a social institution, the contemporary family is in transition. Some traditional, previously dominant family functions have begun to share the forefront with other positive functions and values, for example, mutual understanding and care by spouses and regard for all members' individual value, including children as unique personalities.

## ■ Conclusions

The modern Uzbek family is moving increasingly toward the nuclearization that changes its customary functions and priorities. Economic and policy interventions also influence and transform traditional family structures.

The term *head of household* no longer fully encompasses the notion underlying this position. While in a fully traditional family, the head of household was always a breadwinner, and the wife a housekeeper. Nowadays, however, wives are more likely to be professionals than full-time housekeepers. In other words, the modern notion of family is steadily moving toward equality. "Headship" in family relations is currently expressed through organization of everyday routines and lifestyle; perhaps one should speak of leadership, rather than headship.

Good education and professionalism provide women a basis for gaining economic independence in the family.

Families try to provide women a good education to ensure better standing in a transitional society and in professional employment—thus improving their position in the family. Therefore, the number of educated women professionals is growing every year.

Many women have started their own small and medium businesses, and many others are heading organizations and companies. These women provide a significant share of income for their families.

In modern families, both spouses often have careers and earn good incomes. Therefore, comfort and household chores are divided somewhat equally. However, in such cases, wives often voluntarily relinquish nominal dominance to husbands, while retaining actual leadership.

Many families practice double leadership, especially in young urban families and in families whose members are highly educated. In such families, members share leadership according to their inclinations; some are better at educating children, others at housekeeping or organizing pastimes.

Modern mothers-in-law matured into adulthood during a time of change, when women actively combined household chores and professional employment. Therefore, they understand young daughters-in-law and are ready to provide them opportunities for successful combination of all functions. They do not oppose young women's inclination to study or work. Moreover, they help them with household chores and with childcare because they understand that revenue benefits all. As a primary return, they have at least the respect and friendliness of young women.

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